

THE
Power of Gold Displayed!

IN THE
HUMANE PROPOSAL

OF THE
RIGHT HON. *WILLIAM PITT*,
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,

TO BRING FORWARD

An Act to put his MAJESTY into the disagreeable Situation of signing a Decree, that no sick or lame Person, in Great Britain, shall have a Medicine of Repute without paying Tribute; which the Writer contends, is not justifiable either by the Law of God, or Man, and is a disgraceful Impost, as it places the Life of a human Being in competition with a Three-penny or Six-penny Stamp, &c.

By FRs. SPILSBURY.

THIRD EDITION.

IT IS THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY I PLEAD.

L O N D O N,
P R I N T E D in the Y E A R
MDCCLXXXVIII.

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P R E F A C E.

THE reader may remember the opposition Lord John Cavendish's medicine act received from me in the general execution thereof; before even its commencement, I published my opinion in the public papers: it was an act against the five patent medicines only then existing. Soon after I wrote a pamphlet, entitled, Advice to Booksellers not to sell Stamps, nor the Public to pay for them, Patent Medicines excepted.* In consequence thereof, Messrs. Dicey, Messrs. Wrays, and Mr. Newbery refused to take out a licence the next year, on which trials commenced; Mr. Newbery having but one patent medicine in force, gained a verdict in his favour; but Messrs. Wrays having sold a tooth-brush, was adjudged for so heinous

* The Monthly Reviewer on this performance observed, —Mr. Spillsbury has made many shrewd Remarks on a nice subject, and the public are much obliged to him.

a crime to stamp his Daffy's Elixir, &c. while Messrs. Dicey were allowed to sell theirs duty free.

My Discursory Thoughts on the medicine and the horse act were then published.— I claim the credit that I was the first person in England who stood up for the farmers and the labouring part of the community, and contended the horse act did not require a horse to be entered which was merely rode on through necessity. The alteration of these acts has justified and crowned my endeavours to soften and equalize them.

Respecting the medicine act, finding booksellers imposing stamps where the act did not require it, I wrote several letters to them in the newspapers; and this epistle, now re-printed from the folio second edition was one, which I was preparing for their consideration, in hopes of driving that dreadful apparition from before their eyes, an Exchequer Writ.

I own I laboured hard in this unfruitful vintage, and was in hopes his Majesty would not have signed this paragon of acts, entitled the medicine act, which operates only against his afflicted subjects, and is a most
partial

partial one indeed. Why? — because all other taxes a person may choose if he will pay such imposts—here he cannot. To explain—a man may choose whether he keeps horses, servants, or a house, but no man can command health. It has been argued, that the principle I wrote on was self-interest, from the act militating against my line of business. In answer thereto, I solemnly declare I am greatly benefited by the medicine act, and have not a wish for repealing it on my account: But as to the principle, I execrate it beyond all imagination as the most heavy unexemplary tax human nature ever experienced, an impost on misery and disease *. Moreover when it is remembered his Majesty, whom heaven bless, came to preside over us, he succeeded to the greatest possessions as a monarch that ever this country witnessed — When he came to the throne, should it have been whispered to him by a superior being, that in a few years he should sign an act which would wrench a partial tribute from persons afflicted with the ITCH, the LEPROSY, and the SCAB, because

* It is remarkable this act does not extend to diseased cattle.

they

they used the best means in their opinion and power to free themselves from such loathsome distempers, would not that memorable exclamation Haseel uttered to Eli-sha on another occasion, have occurred to his mind.

I never understood that Great Britain was so reduced in her finances, as to require such modes of taxation—I thought the honour of my King was too sacred thus to be sported with, and in particular after that fatal era the conclusion of a civil war with America, who refused to have their property excised by stamps; when Mr. Pitt, who introduced the second general medicine act, declared in the House of Commons a year after, much was to be said in favour against taxing medicines when the perfumery bill was in debate, I own it gave me pleasure After the medicine act had passed I suppressed the remaining sheets, from which this is now printed in compliance with the wish of a number of my patients, as a memorable protest against a medicine act by an individual; the other remarks is the last essay I published in the news-papers on this act; and at that time did intend amusing myself with
with

with occasional remarks, either in a serious or a comic stile; but my attention was called off by my vocation, and observing Quacks, had gained peculiar advantages, and the sale of medicines increased,* I agreed with the public, who should dare now to bring any accusations against the Royal Society of Quacks, who now are complimented with M. L. by way of honorary decree — whose interest is promoted — whose character is

* At the Stamp Office it is spoken with peculiar pleasure of the increasing demand for medicine stamps — what a godlike subject for exultation! Another triumph of Mr. Pitt's penetrating wisdom which adorns his administration is:—The officers of the Stamp Office, with his approbation, do not scruple to own they patronize informers, a set of men so justly reprobated in the Morning Herald, October 9, 1788, from which the following lines are an extract.

“ It is a lamentable instance of state necessity, that such miscreants should be nurtured in a country where *honor* and *confidence* are held as manly virtues. The encouragements offered to those reptiles are to all intents and purposes, premiums on the basest kind of villainy, instigating unprincipled wretches to cultivate the confidence of the credulous and unsuspecting, and then bribing them to treachery and ruin.

“ Such measures may have a temporary effect in *partially* benefiting the revenue, but they in reality serve only to injure it in a tenfold degree.—The fellow, who once descends to the baseness of an Informer, is precluded by general contempt from seeking subsistence by any honest calling.

“ *Treachery, perjury, and collusion*, are the adopted sources of his existence, and to these he resorts as his private purposes suggest—regardless of the revenue or its defaulters.

“ The reflection is still more dreadful, when we view the consequences of a connection, or rather *co-partnership* between these outcasts of society, and the *guardians* of our laws:—that such a connection exists, cannot be doubted.

“ This subject, as interesting to the morals of the people, and ultimately to the existence of the state, merits parliamentary consideration—and the immediate adoption of some commutary principle in the revenue laws—effectually adequate to secure the necessary imposts, for the support of the state, without resorting to the infamous assistance of perjurers, and the explosion of social confidence.”

refined,

refined, and rendered as immaculate as a Chancellor of the Exchequer — No more is feared the scoff of vulgar minds ; they rank with courtiers at St. James's — there viewed with admiration as the prop of a fallen state. Their budgets teeming only for the good of the nation, appear in superior light over other Doctors stuff as comets blaze more fiery than other stars. Ask the question, for whose benefit they vend their packets? *Ego & Meus Rex* is the answer. — Thus in unison they sing, with Ministers of state,

QUACKS ALL.

Ere I close this preface, I beg leave to acknowledge and shall ever retain a grateful sense of the candor, and gentlemens behaviour I experienced from his Majesty's Honourable Commissioners of the Stamps, relative to the various and numerous strictures on the medicine act, during two year's contention.

*Soho Square,
October 10, 1788.*

F. Spilisbury.

TO THE
BOOKSELLERS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN,

Who had imposed on the Public, Stamps with the common Medicines, only through Fear of an Exchequer Threat, under the Notion that the Act of Parliament, as instituted by Lord John Cavendish against Patent Medicines, 1783, included all other Nostrums they sold.

GENTLEMEN,

IS there occasion to address myself once more on this mournful subject, to persuade you to act as men, endowed with reason, as citizens of a free country, blessed with the name of Britons? Survey your fetters, woven by imaginary power, rivetted by terror, which have disgraced yourselves, and reflect no credit either on your King or country. The Barons of the Exchequer, the guardians of constitutional freedom are now your friends; they have declared from the Bench of Justice, no such acts as the medicine act is, (which operates only by fear, in a partial manner on the subject, contrary to the dictates of reason, justice, and humanity,

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manity, founded on no decree of the Legislature,) ought to exist in this land; at the same time they observed, the more they read the act, the less they understood it, and with alacrity granted Messrs. Wray a new trial, who had been found guilty of the heinous crimes of selling *two tooth brushes* with tooth powder.

Gentlemen, have I not reason to rejoice, have I not reason to triumph, who at the first commencement of this ambiguous, ill-shapen act, opposed its monstrous stride; and whose leviathan-maw was only to be satiated with all that a man, or a minister of state, should hold worth preserving, viz. the honour of his King, the liberty of the subject, the dignity of his country! For these have I pleaded, for these have I braved danger, in my tracts, Advice to Booksellers, Discursory Thoughts, &c. How could you, ye men of books, sacrifice to fear your known good opinion of your Monarch? How could you believe his royal heart delighted to add distress to misery? What have you observed in your King, to credit the disgraceful story? A King signing an act, that when his subject was bit by a mad dog, it demanded a tribute from the terrified sufferer, or no medicine to heal his wound; or that his Majesty's finances were so reduced, as to oblige him to countenance an edict, which bows to the prostitute in pleasing view; by her, that baneful curse of health shall spread its poignant sting, which demands inevitably the swift aid of medicine, fettered with a stamp. Would Rome have thus chid her sons who had indiscreetly sacrificed to nature's laws? No—it is only at a Stamp Office where Haman's fell principles in epitome are remembered. Can you reconcile to your minds, a King, and such a paternal King as ours is, blest
with

with a Queen, an amiable Queen, whom even slander ne'er whispered surmise of ill; could her King, and our Monarch, sign so ungracious an act, which wrests a tax from the female servant, because the imbecility of her sex claims a peculiar care? Is it possible? Can a King take against his own subjects, and exult in their misery? Is royalty a bar to disease? Will FEVERS, GOUT, DROPSY, CONSUMPTION, EVIL, LEPROSY, STONE, CHOLIC, stand at a distance, nor dare invade the palace? Then may we suppose that Kings feel not as common men. Is it not enough for human nature to bear the ills which sickness, disease, or accidents create, without being tortured by forward, cruel servants of the Crown, who to gratify the lust of power, trample on all laws human and divine? Whilst they reprobate a highwayman's proceedings, they act on the same principle, only diversified in the application; for have not servants of the Crown demanded of you, by threats, to act contrary to the constitution of this country, which militated against yourselves, and aggrandized your neighbour, which must transfer your business to another shop, where no crossed stamp mark'd the threshold. Who would have credited the report, should it have been foretold, that ministers of this country would have insisted on their servants to go round the kingdom with the Exchequer cudgel in their hand, and threaten booksellers to commit an act which human nature revolts at—To refuse a woman in labour a cheap medicine to ease her pains without paying for a stamp. Let her die first, is the language of the Stamp Office; or, We'll exchequer you. Again, find a parallel in any history, state, or country, of the following impost; I challenge all the antiquarians of the age

to do it; a tax (proclaim not the disgraceful badge) which the officers of the Crown of Great Britain have demanded, in the King's name, on a pot of ointment to cure the itch; and insisted the polluted out-cast wretch, though scarce cloaths to cover his nakedness, should pay threepence for a stamp, or his disease should worry him to death; or, what would turn to a better profit for the Stamp Office, he might infect other persons, and then, joyful sound, more stamps would be disposed of!

These are the decrees, formed under the construction of the King's Stamp Office! Are these deeds proper to be ranged in the historian's page, as acts of George the III^d? Why, then, not procure a law, that whatever person is shipwrecked on your coast, he shall take so many stamps; or those persons who have their houses burnt down, they shall be obliged to buy your paper currency, *id est*, stamps. These acts, ministers may say, are disgraceful, and no nation but an abandoned one would enact them. Are they so? Not more than the imaginary medicine act, which is so pious, so loyally construed for the honour and interest of the King, and he that will not gulp the creed down, is flagelated with the Exchequer scourge, to urge the bookseller to be upon the watch; where, if he sees a fellow creature fall from his horse and bruise himself, the unfortunate person must purchase a stamp before he can receive a medicine of repute to soothe his pain. Can there be (to Britons I appeal) a more humiliating, disgraceful circumstance in this country, than to see a set of loyal subjects pointed at by a malignant partiality, founded in a jealous surmise, harrassed by the Stamp Office, under the shadow of an act of Parliament, to commit actions which are almost

most as unnatural as if they were required to sell their children. Yet no act of Parliament exists which will warrant such encroachments on the subject. For the dignity of human nature, for the honour of my King and country, I contend and have opposed these arbitrary unjustifiable deeds, which heretofore were never countenanced in this or any other free country.

Who will join issue, and say, such heavy imposts torn from the sick, the lame, the diseased part of the community, are to be countenanced in this Christian land? Not the House of Commons, not the House of Lords, not his Majesty, nor even the Hon. William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose great power stands unrivalled; witness, Britons wearing a stamp on their heads. Then, if there is no act of Legislature to justify these shameful, pilfering depredations from the people, why does a minister withhold his protection, one session after another, from a set of men, only sufferers because they are loyal, because they are conscientious men, because they are fearful to contend with Government? Is it for the honour of a minister to sport his strength with the man unarmed by power, naked as to riches, and whom he can terrify with the anathema, wrote in Exchequer form, in like manner as the approach of a wolf spreads terror to the flock? Do ministers of the Crown expect the people to act virtuously, to live honestly, to possess integrity? Let ministers look at the medicine act; there they will see oppression stalk with gigantic stride, treading on the liberty of the subject, laughing at justice, and sacrificing humanity to malignancy and avarice. Why will ministers of state form such crippled paths for the inferior ranks of mankind to walk on? Why will not the rulers
of

of the nation, when they find errors in their acts of Parliament, shew a readiness to correct them? For interest they will do it. Has, then, honour nor justice no claim to attention? Is it not, ye guardians of the land, a sore affliction to the owner of cattle, to hear his beast low with pain? Is that beast, or is an infant dying with disease, an object of taxation? I only ask the question. Are they fit objects for sport? If they are, throw off the mask, enact a law, that every person shall consume a stamp between his bread and butter every morning; or that the people inhabiting Great Britain shall be bled four times a year, or take a stamp. These laws, these acts, would be more honourable, more equitable, than your proceedings on the medicine act, where you doom a fellow-creature to death, rather than lose selling a stamp with a common medicine conveyed by a bookseller, although no act of legislature exists to justify such proceedings. To tax Quacks, or any other titulary traders, if hurtful to the community, I am not concerned; but when I observe his Majesty's honourable Commissioners of the Stamp Office breathing a language, instead of villainous deceitful Quack, it is now, Dear brother, good creature, sell your medicines, sell your stuff, sell your poisons, or what you will, only sell our stamps. When I hear that men in so honourable a station send their emissaries round the country, insisting on booksellers taking out a Five Shilling Licence, on pain of being exchequered, and oblige them to sell stamps, and say, you are the persons Government meant to tax, as we construe it so and so; and at the same time let a next door neighbour sell without stamps, the same commodity; can a person, unless he is lost to all feeling which adorns the soul, do less than reprobate such actions,

actions, which disgrace man, mar the beauty of our constitution, and render our Monarch the object of pity. Reflection, awake not, lest thou bring to remembrance what this country was a few years back, when the people paid their taxes as chearful as one who giveth his corn to be ground and received flour in return: but now, our corn is demanded, and bran is thought a sufficient recompence.

In former administrations, Justice and Humanity adorned our superiors' councils; but now, an avaricious deceitful principle sways the officers of the Crown, who luxuriously bask in the thought of the vast wedges of gold which are produced from scraps of paper, forgetting that the gold is wrung from their own bankers, the people, the strength of the nation; for this country, at this present moment, is fast consuming its vital principle, on which its very existence as a state depends; and a little time will loudly proclaim the deep decline of this once flourishing empire.

N. B. The foregoing letter was partly printed when I read the medicine act was to be cancelled, and a new one introduced of a more extensive nature, by the Right Honourable William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer. In all my strictures on the act, I never dictated what I thought was proper to be done on the occasion, being persuaded whenever the medicine act came to be discussed, it would at once appear with such a horrid aspect, that no minister, nor no other person who had retained the principles of honour and humanity, would patronize the act in any shape.

T H E

NEW MEDICINE ACT considered,

AS NOW SUBSTITUTED IN THE

HOUSE of COMMONS, JULY 8, 1785.

BY the new proposed bill as stated in the public prints, I observe the medicine act is to be equalized, the rich as well as the poor are to swallow stamps with their medicines, without exceptions: So far this may be thought just. Does it alter the principles of the act? Reconcile it to your minds, you who consider medicines as only articles fit for TRAFFIC. I abhor the act; a tax on medicines is but a title, but it has an object, as a warrant has, which ends with an order for the execution of a fellow creature. Does it militate against pleasure? *No.*—Luxury? *No.*—Or healthy persons? *No.* It is an act which eyes the sink of corruption settled in the limb of a fellow creature; gladdens in the reverberated sound of distress. Aches, pains, and groans, are music to the spirit of the act, they are its very life; illness or disease are its proper food; for what is an act to raise specie without it is made productive? Frequent alarms of the people being in danger of fevers may be raised, and the usual time of quarantine dispensed with, that the plague may spread its baneful influence; the wells of water contaminated; then men, women, and children may be

be seen in the streets grasping medicines most gorgeously decorated with stamp, whilst the table of the illustrious supporters of this most amiable christian device, shall smoke with the fat of venison, and rich viands grace the board, equal to the lordly Despots.

To those who judge of these matters by what quantity of bullion this act produces, this act will not want for embellishing titles, any more than the marble monument a polish to render it pleasing to the sight, which covers a rotten carcase. Call the medicine act by what name you please, I will protest against it; it is armed with a sting against distress, groaning under insupportable agony; it is a brutal act—a brutal act did I say?—from whence borrowed we that idea?—Do brutes prey on the same denominated race?—Will lions welter in the blood of lions? *No.*—Will a tyger seek a tyger to mangle his limbs for food? *No.*—Whence then the term brutal?—Beast acts towards beast agreeable to the laws of nature; it is only man “who feeds on man,” who talks of reformation, of more refined notions; yet this man, arrayed in scarlet or in purple, does not always remember the dignity of his station, but ferrets, tortures, nay, for interest—devours his fellow creature; then, which deserves the epithet of brute most, man or beast?

Such a proposed medicine act no Heathen, Jew, or Mahometan Minister was ever recorded to have even brooded such a detested thought of, much more dare stand up in a collective assembly to propose to force a tribute from women with child, children afflicted with the small-pox, colds, sore throats, convulsions, and from men afflicted with ulcerated legs, from whence purulent matter ouzes in hot steams so virulent as to scald the

seeming sound part of the skin, or with other maladies, which our tender constitutions are likely to catch, even from the air we breathe in. This glorious discovery, this friendly act of commiseration, which is to act as the Salvator of the nation, verging on bankruptcy, a Christian claims the honour; not a professor of the Roman Catholic religion; no, a purer one than that, the reformed one, a Protestant of the Church of England. Who will credit the story? Does a minister of Great Britain (will they say) think to impose on the King's understanding, and cloud his sensibility, with golden arguments, to sign the decree against his doleful subjects, who stand in need of all the protection, either care or power can bestow, that like a ship (which has been tossed by cross winds and storms, puts into port to fit it once more to combat the boisterous wave) they become renovated so as to pursue the course of life.

Let foreign nations, whom yet humanity blesses, reject the report with scorn; as when a traveller relates he saw a lamb forsake the grass and feed on vulture's prey; if Fame, in pity to Britannia, refuses to sound Avarice's triumph, let Truth declare, last week the Senators of Great Britain met, where it was proposed in parliament, under the sanction of a medicine tax, to raise supplies from a spoil, extorted from his Majesty's most piteous unfortunate subjects, stretched on the tenterhook of pain, tormented with diseases, which terrify the poor or rich wretch, worse than any torments Hell can inflict, as far as we know, or have a right to think. — Harsh and ungenerous would be the sojourner's surmise, whom night had overtaken in a lonely place, should he find a hospitable roof, where himself and beast are bade a hearty

heartly welcome, expressed by officious care, should he imagine, this courteous kindness was but a prelude to some horrid purpose, when fast in sleep his outward centinels are locked; yet thus ungrateful man oft judges of his Creator's bounty, ere he sheds the encumbered mantle, how will he smile at his childish fears when robing with immortality, whilst experimentally he feels the attributes of a God.

A tax on illness!—set dogs to gnaw a human creature, bears no comparison to those pains mankind feel when thus diseased, for dogs lead to mercy; in their gripe they introduce that blessed friend DEATH, the great deliverer from oppression, tyranny, disease, and misery.

Who can behold even a dog in pain that can avoid pity if he cannot relieve; but to see officers of the crown harrassing a fellow creature, for a little pelf, laboring under distress of the most accumulating kind, that disease—sickness—putrefaction—accompanied with pains and poverty—neglected by the faculty, from a consciousness of their inability to relieve—shunned by their acquaintance, lest they imbibe the pestilential vapours. How melancholy the thought! Yet from such diseased objects, a Minister of State, with as much composure as a rat-catcher kills vermin, meditated an act of parliament which would pointedly militate against the welfare of the human creation, loaded with insupportable infirmities, for he enacted that medicines of established reputation, which were administered either by outward or inward application, should not be applied unless they gave a stipulated sum for a piece of paper.

What is this decree but a secondary one to Nebuchadnezzar's which threatened death to

those who did not bow to the idol of Gold? Yet this medicine act, under the dispensation of the gospel, is far more cruel. Does Christian power act here like a Samaritan, to pour oil into the wound?—How reversed!—Does it act, like the Levite and Priest, who are held up by the Saviour of the world as men actuated by selfish principles, void of compassion? *No.*—The Priest and the Levite, if they did not relieve the wounded man, were not as yet such hardened monsters as take advantage of his distress. Formerly Kings of Albion delighted to act the physician's part, and invested the unhappy mortal, afflicted with the EVIL, with a piece of gold; Heaven sanctified the deed: Now a minister urges his Majesty to levy on his own diseased subject a piece of money, or neither he, nor yet his beast, if ill, shall be entitled to the general benefits of medicine, Heaven's gift, which by providence was designed to be as free for all nature's children as the air we breathe, or the water of the earth; the wretch who taxes one, would, could his unhumanized soul find means, curse the other with his official breath—for lucre.

The medicine act, whilst in debate, is the minister's; but when the King signs the mandate it is then cloathed with royalty, it speaks majestic, and awes the subject to compliance with tremendous voice; the inhabitants of Great Britain must hear a King speak to his officers of state agreeable to the act: "Let no one of my subjects, who
 " are grievously tormented with pains, mortifi-
 " cations, gangrene wounds, fluxes, and other
 " deadly diseases, have certain medicines they
 " desire, unless they pay a tribute, on pain of
 " my displeasure, and the heavy penalties the act
 " prescribes."

Is not this a fair delineation of the intended act?—Divines say bad thoughts and diabolical actions originate below, from whence we pretend to borrow colours to paint an infernal scene; but the original design, I am inclined to think, is too often borrowed from earth.

Suppose a minister should have power to persuade the King to approve of the edict—what is this edict? Man may stile it a medicine act, but I call it a redemptory act—What says the act? pay a tribute, or no medicine; woe to the man who dares let any person have a medicinal packet without a stamp; here is your redemption, or rather a passport to shew you have the King's leave—to live—Courteous Royal bequest—what wonderful condescension. Is not this a just explanation and intent of the act, fabricated in this once truly honoured island, the envy of all foreign powers? Rather than thus inflict the sickly diseased subject, I ask the Minister, I ask the Rt. Hon. William Pitt, whether it would not redound more to his honour as a man, as minister of collossian power, to send round a party of guards to the healthy persons, and demand of them to give sixpence for the emblazoned paper or put them to death, rather than go to the sick man, expiring with disease, tormented with ulcers and carious bones, and insist on his taking the official stamps, by which the gold already produced being sufficient to turn any minister's brain, he imagines he is in character of the King's huntsman, head over the hounds, hunting deer instead of his Majesty's people.

What sentiments do ministers imbibe by attending a king's throne? Is the life of a Briton to be put in competition with a three-penny, six-penny, or a one shilling stamp? Britons! there was a
time

time you were not held so cheap; but now, if no stamp at hand no medicine, or perhaps the needy shopkeeper may have a stamp which may be turned to money, sells an old decayed medicine, which buys a loaf to feed a famished child, whilst the parent of a worthy family falls a sacrifice to the degenerate humanity of ministers, who enjoined a medicine to be embalmed in *red stripes*, true emblem of the merciless act.

Wherewithal shall a minister find a charm to fascinate a king to sign an act, which inadvertently may cost hundreds of his subjects their lives? — Of what materials do ministers suppose our Sovereign is composed of? — Has not his Majesty amiable fair daughters? — Are they not women? — Are they not princely flowers nursed with peculiar state? — Yet all the care Art and Nature can bestow, sometimes those pretty plants will droop, nay die. — If pain attacks them does their royal birth fortify them to be indifferent as to the effects or consequences? — They are attended in stately forms, physic arrayed in pomp; do the courts of princes make the power of physicians equal to the desires and the necessities of their royal patients? Suppose they do; what are the thousands of females who reside in the inferior walk of life to do, who cannot afford to charm the dispenser of health to visit them? — Reason and experience hint a cheap remedy, which may shorten their pains and restore them to health. How horrid the idea, ye servants of the crown, to take advantage of the frailties of the female sex, not brought on by choice, by accident, or by remissness, to raise a revenue? Is it not sporting with the great Creator who ordained these causes for most important ends, which none but fools would mention but with solemnity? But to
raise

raise money under pretence of supporting the honor of a King, and the dignity of the nation, by such means, who would suggest and countenance?

To apologize for such a noxious act, specious reasons will not be wanted; money may be the minister's plea for such an unprecedented step; it may bring in thousands of pounds to the Treasury; let it bring in more gold than all the nation's worth, not all the gold which earth can produce can wipe away the stain — Great Britain bartering *Honour and Humanity for Gold.*

Let ministers use all the art they are masters of to harmonise the canibal deed, which muzzles the noble science of physic, and proclaims in tyrannical accents to the sick, “you shall swallow our stamps, or linger under your disease;” I trust this unexampled mode of taxation will not find patrons in the House of Lords.

The Right Hon. Mr. Pitt may plead, he only corrects the medicine act, first formed by Lord John Cavendish, against the five patent medicines, but now extends it to all medicines, pharmaceutical ones excepted. Is this justice? why tax one medicine more than another, because the one has gone through an expensive trial, before it has gained universal approbation to stamp its credit as the best remedy we can ascertain, for such and such complaints, or for a better reason, because ye know the afflicted will as regularly turn to the advertised medicine for redress as the cattle go to the river to quench their thirst, when the usual fountain ceases to relieve their wants. Is that Mr. Pitt's excuse, let him enjoy it. Let him turn his thoughts to that stately monument in Westminster Abbey reared by national gratitude, to the Earl of Chatham, whereon is inscribed, “Under whose administration Divine Providence
“ exalted

“ exalted Great Britain to an height of prosperity and glory unknown to any former age ;” and let this question be asked him “ If it would “ be agreeable to his feelings as a Minister, to “ the love he bears his country, to his zeal for “ the King’s honour, to let the sculptor add :” *The son of this illustrious nobleman, who was Prime Minister, proposed to his sovereign, 1785, to raise a subsidy under the tenor of a medicine act, from the inhabitants of Great Britain, who were afflicted with the ITCH, STONE, GOUT, LEPROSY, ULCERS, WEAK EYES, SORE THROATS, and other complaints, of a nature too bad to describe in this sanctuary : This second inscription, which points to the lamentable changes of State Maxims and Affairs, is a memento of the sudden transition of worldly GRANDEUR !*

If the Right Hon. Mr. Pitt is not the proposer, chief patron and engineer — who raises on this occasion this unnatural barrier in the afflicted’s road, who wish to gain a little ease, a small respite, before they are numbered with the dead — I do most respectfully beg his pardon for introducing any idea that may appear personal. — The reviewers of my publications have said, I am warm on the occasion. Happy should I be, could I find a friend to prove the medicine act, bowed only to reason and good policy, not swayed by lucre. At first, the plea was, the tax was levied at Quacks, a supposed nefarious unprincipled set of beings. Was that the case, how poor, how abject, a Minister would render his Monarch to persuade him to become their patron, a nominal sharer of the spoil. Is not this to a witness, *a god kissing carrion*? To heaven I appeal, I had rather see all Quackery, or what you please to call it, banished from the land,

land, than live to see a British State, dependent on such vile prostitution to support its existence as a kingdom.

May Heaven preserve our King in health, although his Majesty should be constrained, by looking through false mediums, to extort a tax from an unfortunate yet loyal subject, because through accident he may be bit by a mad dog, or infected with some dangerous loathsome disease.

*Dispensary, Soho Square,
July 15, 1785.*

Francis Spilbury.

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POST.

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE proposed medicine act I have read; perhaps it may now lay before that venerable, truly honourable House of Lords, for their consideration, either to countenance or reject.

Cool and dispassionate, as if now before their Lordships, I solemnly declare in my humble opinion, the medicine act as now engrossed, cannot with propriety be complied with; it requires moral impossibilities, and has many absurdities; let it be tried by the penetration of wisdom; it is an impolitic proposal, it militates powerfully against the interest of Government, and the life of the subject. Unhappy consequences will prove its baneful effects; nor shall I wonder when a woman's mind is agitated with the cries of her infant, she seeks the usual remedy on these occasions, and is told the King demands a tax for a stamp, or no medicine; your child may perish. In astonishment she forgets the mother, when she hears the Monarch has forgot he is a father—drops her child insensibly, and marks the earth with BLOOD! Is there justice in the act?—No! justice is violated, the poor sick man is the glorious prize which this act drags in triumph.—Will Benevolence patronise the deed?—No!—cruelty stands confessed. Mark the essence of the words, the very criterion of the act. To tax all *medicinal nostrums which are used either to heal the human body by internal or external application, when diseased.* Heavens!!! what a crime it is now deemed to endeavour to restore health, the fountain

fountain of strength and beauty to the sons and daughters of the land; rather say, what a heart that man must have, if man you can call him, who could dictate these inimical wishes, with a view to stamp them into a law. Let the prosecuted wretch who steals for bread, plead this illustrious example of depravity in a higher power; then let Government put to death the victim, and be satisfied he suffered justly;—in the sight of his Maker, reason and equity will declare him murdered. Will Christianity adopt this maxim of taxation for one of her precepts?—No, nor no other religion in the world; nor can there be even a faint trace of any state, nation, or human being so unhappily divested of the feelings of humanity since the world began, as the authors of this uncharitable mode of taxation. What is this but engrafting the tenets of an inquisition on a British stock? Exact money, or let a person remain in torture; define it otherwise, Candour, if you can. Inquisitors of Spain would abhor the idea of adding distress to the afflicted for the sake of gain, they would abjure such a doctrine as the one now proposed by the Minister of Great Britain; not to let a sick or lame or diseased person have a medicine to remedy his complaint, and render himself once more an useful member to society, without paying a tribute: What a language does this refined system of taxation display in this land, boasting of a superlative degree of piety towards God? It is an awful circumstance, and a new phenomenon, to behold the hand-writing of a king, acting partially to his innocent subjects, first cut off from the general society of the world by illness, now made the proposed objects of singular chastisement of their sovereign. Let Britons talk no more of virtue, honour, valour,

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humanity,

humanity, charity, or whatever enobles man, exalts a state, or dignifies a king—that scrawl indented on the parchment, that hostile declaration against all diseased subjects, or whatsoever preserves the human body from decay, if enforced, cancels all pretensions to greatness, or whatsoever is praise-worthy.

If the arguments of *sensibility*, intimately connected with the distresses of mankind, cannot prevail against the only strong irresistible plea, a minister's *salvo*—the treasury wants food,—then ye sick and diseased victims of power be composed, ye shall on this occasion be *honourably embalmed*, and most *royally entombed*.

* * The author having submitted these pleadings to his Majesty,* in defence of the divine science of Physic, being deeply impressed by the necessity of a more exalted skill in the medical art, to relieve the infirmities of human nature, than the present age can witness. To the reproach of *dignified* nature, and every sacred tie which religion inspires, the POWER of GOLD triumphed on August 2, 1785, when his most gracious Majesty George the Third, King of Great Britain, &c. signed the Medicine Act.

* These Essays were also sent, penny-post, to his Majesty's Privy Counsellors, and the principal members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, to the number of 300 copies.

REMARKS

REMARKS *on the Right Hon. William Pitt's
Mode of Taxing the Sick and Diseased Inhabitants
of Great Britain, under the Title of a Medicine
Act, signed by his Majesty.**

HOW lamentable is the idea of a King entertaining an opinion of his people, to suppose there does exist in this land, any set of beings, however insensible to the charms of virtue, or immersed in distress, that come under the denomination of *subjects*, that they should possess such abandoned principles, that for the sake of gain, or in dread of a Monarch's displeasure, they shall, they must commit actions which violate human nature, in defiance to those persuasive benign passions which philanthropy suggests to reflecting minds. Can persons, for fear of penalties, divest themselves of those pure congenial sentiments which the sacred scriptures inculcate? those aspirations of divinity which glow in the heart of man, kindled by that all-benevolent supreme God of inspiration—great Parent of the Universe, extending love and dominion through immense space, displayed in numerous worlds, either observed or brought into contemplation's view by that creative fancy-ray of Omnipotence, free emanation of the Deity, which leads us to sojourn with ideal spirits in unknown regions,—blessed trace of refined heavenly power, freed from mortality? To such pretensions man claims an alliance; in such pleasing animating hope, philosophy and religion lend their aid, and sing the pleasing theme. Thus
inspired,

* From Almon's General Advertiser, Sept. 10, 1785.

inspired, we bless the Creator, and, by sympathy united, pity or assist our fellow creatures, as their wants claim our courtesy, as far as prudence dictates, at least not refuse the wish of commiseration; — who then, desires to act otherwise, proclaims the unfeeling man, a creature self-expelled from that protection nature wished and intended her children should inherit. Long has Britain enjoyed the common rights of nature, whose salutary decrees, founded in justice, proclaimed the excellency of the Constitution, till a young Minister, basking in the eye of his Sovereign, fancied himself greater than a King, forgot what was due to man, formed a new medicine act, an act which breathes a curse to all the inhabitants of this land, wishing that they may be a diseased people, in order that medicines, most gorgeously arrayed in crimson stamps, may be disposed of. This edict, I contend, is an impolitic one, differing from all others in point of circumstance, and that justice, and influence, and congruity, which are and should be the concomitants of acts of legislature. This act I deem an impious one, because it operates in defiance of the precepts of the gospel, — it is tyrannical in its injunctions — cruel in its proceedings — ungracious in its imperious commands — strikes its venom at morality — disrobes Majesty — cuts asunder that persuasive prevalent band, which cements the hearts of the subject to the breast of the King; it disgraces the British legislature, who, by this act, commit a trespass on nature's walk; brutal in the ideas, barbarous in the execution, it requires more homage than ever was recorded, of either savage, or barbarian, demanding of a fellow creature in the world; yet here, men, Christians, Britons, are daily summoned to shake off
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the man, despise Christianity, forget the venerable name of Britons; to hunt out the sick and diseased objects, when found, join to place a terrible Act of Parliament at the door, as a sentinel to watch the ghastly wretched being, who once wore a human form; that no medicine of repute come within his reach, save he delivers money for a stamp:—there lay in pain, in dread of death, is the meaning of the act, unless you comply:—Despicable memento! of ministerial human frailty, forming an apology for the banditti that infest the environs of the metropolis; proving, that for the sake of lucre, government does not care what life is lost—how their subjects may be tortured—suffering under the most complicated evils, that disease, and infirmities of nature, or accidents may conspire (joined often to poverty) to render a human being already loathed, yet more wretched:—Such are the tenets of the Medicine Act, which I intend to discuss. Should I, in the prosecution of the subject, alarm the virtuous mind; let it be remembered, I did not make the monstrous sight; I only hold up the mirror, and if a Lamb and a Toad* is seen in conjunction, let them blush who formed the coalition, and wish to extinguish that emulation in

* Are you not concerned for a King's honour, the dignity of the nation?—Look on this picture, which calls for the sting of a scorpion to penetrate the inventor's breast who first drew the design—a LAMB in close compact with a TOAD, linked by solemn league to promote each others interest. Here is seen justice railing against prostitution, yet joining hands to share its wages. Here, dreadful! find a softer term if you like, it is the truth, behold honour is forced from the throne of majesty to embrace the essence of supposed vileness, or, as the Poet expresses, *a God kissing carrion*. Quacks, thus incorporated, need no more the art of gilding their nauseous ware—No, a mantle is wove at the king's house, and the Toad is divested of its deformity by the fleece of the Lamb. Say, will such a representation be an ornament to any country, because the prospective glass by which it is viewed is mounted with gold? See Advice to Bookfellers, page 48.

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the science of Physic, which is only capable to fan, and exalt its sanative powers, to a greater perfection than the present age can boast, and for want of that all-healing influence, thousands of the human race bear their complaints in fable colours; nor do the monuments of the dead forget to upbraid medical presumption, or negligence, and urge the dispenser of health, who stands betwixt the living and the dead to be more vigilant.

*Dispensary, Soho Square,
London.*

Francis Spilbury.

F I N I S.